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## **Insect control grants funded by Governor**

The Governor approved state emergency insect management grants May 18, dedicating a total of \$1,149,926 to the program for fiscal year 2006 - 2007.

Counties, cities or organizations in the state that applied for the grant money will be receiving funds in the next two weeks, said Slade Franklin, weed and pest coordinator for the state department of agriculture.

The emergency insect management program committee assigned \$904,311 to be spent by the end of fiscal year 2006. Grants totaling \$291,950 were approved for fiscal year 2007, to begin July 1, 2006.

The grants will fund mosquito control programs, grasshopper and mormon cricket control programs and education materials to inform the public about West Nile Virus protection.

The committee allocates grant funding mainly in the spring, but, according to Franklin, will meet request applications at any time during the year.

Since the committee's inception in 2003, over \$3.5 million have been spent through the program. In that time, occurrences of West Nile Virus have declined dramatically. In the past four years, there have been 436 positive human cases of the virus and a resulting 11 deaths in the state. Only 12 cases and two deaths were reported in 2005, compared to 414 cases and nine deaths in 2003.

During the program's pilot year, only five counties in the state requested funding from the emergency insect management grants. This year, 16 of the state's counties will receive grants.

The committee reviews grant applications and distributes funding throughout the state. Membership consists of Chairman John Etchepare, Director of the Wyoming Department of Agriculture; Bill Wichers, Deputy Director of Internal Programs at the Wyoming Game and Fish Department; Paige Smith, policy analyst with the governor's planning office; Dr. Walt Cook, assistant state veterinarian and Dr. Terry Creekmore, West Nile Virus research coordinator at the state veterinary laboratory.

Applications for emergency insect management grants are filed with the state department of agriculture. For more information about the emergency insect management program and grants, contact Slade Franklin at (307) 777-6585.

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